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LAYS OF MIDDLE AGE:

AND

OTHER POEMS.

MACMILLAN AND CO. CAMBRIDGE;

AND

23 HENRIETTA-STREET, COVENT-GARDEN, LONDON.

Dublin: WILLIAM ROBERTSON.

Edinburgh: EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

Glasgow: JAMES MACLEHOSE.

Oxford: J. H. AND JAS. PARKER.

LAYS OF MIDDLE AGE:

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BY

JAMES HEDDERWICK.

Cambridge:

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1859.

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PREFACE.

THE aspect of moral life, like the face of nature, is subject to perspective laws: the scene changes with the position of the observer. While Youth is mounting the sunny side of the hill, Middle Life stands at the apex, and Age is descending among the shadows beyond. To each belongs a different sphere of view, with its appropriate objects of incident and reflection.

Such is the experience of every man who lives to realise the facts of existence; and the title of the following 'LAYS,' together with something of their tendency, is thus explained. Dealing with many themes, and briefly with each, it was still the Author's purpose that

they should possess a certain idiosyncrasy of character. They were designed, in short, as a group of musings, growing out of casual emotions, or suggested by passing events, but having more or less affinity with the mind of Middle Age.

The 'MISCELLANEOUS' portion of the Volume comprises a variety of Pieces written during recent years, with the addition of a small selection (revised) from Poems published by the Author at an earlier period of his life. Several of these having been long in circulation in this country and America, generally in an anonymous form, he has felt justified in assigning them a place here.

DECEMBER, 1858.

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LAYS OF MIDDLE AGE.

LAYS OF MIDDLE AGE.

I.

RECONCILED.

OUR loved one lay in depth of suffering,
And there was suffering in all the rooms,
Wide-eyed suspense amid the sickly glooms,
And faltering prayers which no relief could bring.
We saw the agony we could not ease,
As of one drowning in the sight of shore.
At length came lessening pain with more disease—
Came the calm end—a calm unknown before—
A calm rebuke to mortal sorrowing.

Even as in tears we gazed, the silent balm
Fell sweet within, for we began to see
A preparation in the agony,
Until we knew to uplift the grateful psalm,
Reading God's mercy in the tortured breast,
And thinking all was right when all was still.
How could we part with him we loved the best?
But came the calm upon the mighty ill,
And we were sadly calm to see him calm.

Thoughts of that hour have tuned my soul to know
The beauty palaced in the face of death.
How sobless is the absence of all breath!
How soothed the pulse whose tides have ceased to flow!
Who brands with 'tyrant' him who bears release
Up to the martyr's stake, and isles the deep
Through all its raging waste with shores of peace?
O angel Death! that bringest healing sleep
To bosoms wounded with a hopeless woe!

II.

THE RELEASE.

LIKE a world-weary student, free to rove
For ease and health—by fair poetic streams
To cull the flowers that only grow in dreams,
For simple tastes to censure or approve,
Would I with grateful heart make sorrow sweet.
The fitful blooms which now in pride I twine
For thee, dear Friend! may wither at thy feet:
Yet haply may'st thou, in their transient shine,
See gleams of beauty through thine eyes of love.

4

No coming darkness striketh needless fears:
Yet, looking onward o'er life's glittering meads,
I spy a road and wonder where it leads.
A chill is wafted from the fleeting years.
Great Heaven! what doom it were to walk alone
To the final Mystery! but hand in hand,
With all the generation journeying on,
We face with courage due the shadowy land,
And scarce would lag behind our marching peers.

And so, best loved! each sad and gradual trace
Our future may reveal of springtime past
Will catch a soothing from the splendour cast
On Autumn woods. Though each with each keep pace,
And age but mark our long companionship,
If mellowing love of mine new joy illumine
Within thy soul, and crown with smiles thy lip,
To my unstraying eyes through life shall bloom
A youth of beauty in thy matron face.

III.

THOUGHT PICTURES.

Noon walks the earth in Summer's sultry pride.
Bewilder'd butterflies of many hues
Flatter the flowers to yield their honey-dews:
Where the leaves tremble and the shadows hide
Are voices wrestling for the mastery
Of fluted melody in feather'd throats:
White sails are gleaming on the quiet sea:
Along the craggy shore the white gull floats:
For clinging odours scarce a breeze can glide.

The tawny boy-herd wields his wand of power
O'er nibbled mountain steeps; nor knows, nor thinks
How bless'd his station, nor what golden links
Of memory he forgeth hour by hour:
The fragrant kine lie languid in the heat:
Half hid in leaves and smoke the village dreams:
The river glideth at the angler's feet:
Child-voices cheer the glade where beauty gleams
In many a sunny glint and simple flower.

Meet scenes to environ a poetic home!
Ye, from lone impulse of the beautiful,
I joy to paint, even under skies made dull
By hovering smoke, amid a dreary boom
Of city traffic sounding evermore,
Happy to feel that round about me lies
A world as fresh and splendid as of yore,
Whence come sweet airs like breaths from Paradise,
And thoughts like sunbeams gladdening as they come!

IV.

NATURE INEXHAUSTIBLE.

‘WILED by the charm that lies in measured tones,
I grow enamour’d of a patient tune;
Yet lives there now a beauty in the moon,
Or any music in the night wind’s moans,
That has not wrought enchantment many a year?
Seen was the universe with clearer eye,
And heard its melodies with finer ear,
By generations in the dust that lie,
And lo, their laureates on immortal thrones!’

Thus mused I wandering in the year's sweet prime,
At feud with slavery of commonplace—
Seeking how I my casual lay might grace
With thoughts new-borrow'd from the budding-time.
The poet's richest harvest is the Spring.
Yet every opening flower I spied was wreathed
With some old bard's most gentle fancying,
Like the soft incense which itself outbreathed.
Oh, wherefore load it with superfluous rhyme?

Athwart my dawn of hopes there crept a chill,
Like morning frost among the youngling buds:
But when I look'd upon the lands and floods,
And the clear azure, arch'd from hill to hill,
To win new larks to heaven—that hour there came,
Like a rich bride to her adorer's arms,
A summer feeling, like a glow of shame,
To think how I had wrong'd great Nature's charms,
Renew'd and beauteous for the poet still.

V.

BOOKS.

As 'mong the wondrous growths of some hot clime
The traveller pauses, wilder'd with excess
Of trackless herbage, plants of gaudy dress,
And stately palms—so I, through prose and rhyme,
Thick as the forest with its drowsy plumes,
In vain essay to compass in a life
The magic splendours and immortal blooms
Scatter'd o'er pages as the foliage rife
Of smothering summers faint with musk and thyme.

What need of more? In the celestial bowers
Must new stars blossom? Must the burden'd shore
Of the world's continents hunger for more
Far-stretching wealth of shells? Must vernal hours
Alive with birds for richer music pine?
Wherefore more books? Why dip another pen
In the ink that burns by alchemy divine
Like DANÆ's fount, when our tired age of men
Is drench'd and flooded with its aureate showers?

Ah me! we wander in a tangled maze.
There is no waste. Let the eternal gold
From genius' mint be scatter'd myriadfold:
Never a star was launch'd but its fine rays
Took some small shade of darkness from the night;
The stream that sings unseen among the ferns
Bears welcome increase to the ocean's might;
Even the minutest flower the sense discerns
Enriches all the breaths of summer days.

VI.

A DARK BACKGROUND.

ONE said to me, with the meek plea in his face
Of failing health, 'I have a picture, sir,
I wish you much to see.' At secret stir
Of sympathy, I sought his dwelling-place
Where poverty sat bare. From childhood's eyes
Yearn'd looks of age and urged him to fresh toil.
The canvas show'd 'A Dream of Paradise,'
Fairly conceived, and colour'd well in oil,
With EVE's young blush, and ADAM's lofty grace.

It was the only sunshine in the room,
For all the rays of gladness from around
Were gather'd in itself. The garden-ground
Dewy and prank'd with flowers of wondrous bloom,
The skies cerulean, and the first fine forms
Of all humanity, shone like a gleam
Of peaceful azure 'mid a rack of storms.
Much talk'd he of the beauty of his dream—
Much saw I of the sadness of his doom.

Some faults the picture had; but when he roll'd
A paper forth and read—'A poor attempt,
From every sin of genius quite exempt,'
And added, 'It of course came back unsold,'
I had no eyes but for its loveliness,
No feeling but of sorrow for the tear
That came in witness of his dumb distress.
Ah me! that Paradise so sweet and clear!
The sickly artist and the children old!

VII.

UP THE STREAM.

MUSING on aged faces, oft I read
Their history backward. Woman! whom I see
Like dry fruit wrinkled, I can trace in thee
The maiden beauty that was thine indeed;
Smooth thy scored forehead, and about it braid
Soft girlish tresses; open wide thine eyes;
Round out thy cheeks for artless blushes made;
Ruby thy lips to smile at flatteries;
And row thy mouth with pearls of native breed.

Thou walk'st as under burdens. Who so light
In the old century, when thy nimble feet
Leapt to untiring violins, in the fleet
And boisterous country-dance? Oh age's spite!
Dost frown upon the joys 'twas thine to share?
Thou art grave now; yet, at Medean touch
Of fancy, I can see thee young and fair,
In jewell'd splendour mocking age's crutch,
And whirling in the mazes of the night.

What rivals once had barter'd half their gains
And all their sleep for thy conceded kiss!
Do those old lips their low-breathed ardours miss,
And fondly mumble still of love and chains?
I pulp them back to rosebud poutings, bland
And beautiful in maidhood, and I own
The charms that put a price upon the hand
Thou gav'st, in pity of his constant moan,
To him, now old, who laughs at love-sick swains!

VIII.

THE INNER LIFE.

FROM tender thinkings to the eye's fine lid
A dew comes sweetly. Unforgotten sights,
Escapes of travel; chance-spent glorious nights
With those whose memory like a pyramid
Is broadly based and higher than all mists,
Our daily lot of fortune or of wrong,
We tell in fearless prose though the world lists.
But all have secrets which, like griefs in song,
Disguised are utter'd or kept always hid.

Some early cross or long-repentèd sin
Cowers in the heart, of daylight eyes afraid;
Some life-aim miss'd, or failure bitter made
By jeering tongues; some grovelling shame of kin
Draining mute drops; some haunting form and face
More precious than the spoils of many books;—
All these we lock as, in a secret place,
The letters of dead loves, for aching looks
When clouds of loneliness make gloom within.

But even the silent treasury of the breast,
By pride lone-sentinell'd, has a secret spring
Which lays it open. Music's sorrowing,
Through echo of some voice long years at rest,
May touch it groping in the tearful dark.
Some tale which has a mystery of truth
May on a sudden hit the invisible mark,
And charm the cloister'd memories of youth
To tears which but to weep is to be blest.

IX.

A MISER'S TREASURE.

IN a small chamber, cobwebb'd 'gainst the sky,
Where the celestial lights forgotten were,
Sat one of juiceless veins, a usurer,
Gloating on gold with hungry hand and eye.
For him the world had naught of beauty save
The yellow shimmer of his counted heaps,
Nor music but the chink his guineas gave:
These drank he madly in his tortured sleeps,
And ever as he drank his life ran dry.

For him the seasons pattern'd all in vain
The joyous fields. In vain for him the streams
Made breezy melody. No voice of dreams
Came to him from the sea. The russet wain,
Ringing through English lanes, was naught to him.
For him the grove was tuneless; and the skies,
Bounteous in showers, were vile. His vision dim
Saw not the flowers laugh up with liquid eyes
At balmy whisper of the summer rain.

His neighbours wonder'd who might be his heir. .
They call'd him 'miser,' 'wretch,' 'poor grubbing worm.'
'His mind,' said one, 'is crooked as his form,
And more of earth.' Another envying swore,
'By Heaven! his very face—his every look
Is stamp'd with greed.' To gibes he was a stone:
But from a secret drawer he sometimes took,
For tearful gaze when he was quite alone,
A faded writing and a lock of hair!

X.

CHEERFULNESS IN AGE.

I PASS'D a pleasant evening with LEIGH HUNT.
The room was squared with books, 'mong which I spied
Rows of the Tuscan poets. On each side
The fire we sat;—he, as appeared his wont,
Sipping refreshful draughts of sober tea.
Wiry and thin, a figure tall he show'd,
Unbent with years. His gray hair lankily
Over his ears hung straight. His dark eyes glow'd.
He wore the conscious poet in his front.

He talk'd with store of happy similes
Of his own toils; of trials all but past;
Of honours coming to his age at last;
Of stubborn heights surmounted by degrees;
Of KEATS, love-sicken'd with the beautiful;
Of all poetic sweets on Hybla hived;
Of him whose conquering eye was crown and rule—
KEAN—how immortal could his art have lived!
To listen well was all my art to please.

Some men there are of prompt achieving mind
Who wait not any gale to waft them on,
But move like ships that walk the seas alone,
And take its ancient uses from the wind;—
He, the fine bard of tragic Rimini,
Seem'd one of these in that delicious night.
I mark'd his soul of native buoyancy,
And I was cheer'd from sitting in the light
Of his white hairs, and wish'd me of his kind.

XI

THE NEW CEMETERY.

As any lawn this burial-place is even.
Save the white head-stones with their dates of woe,
It yields no sign of those who rest below.
To mourning eyes no outward mark is given
That the smooth sward holds all the heart regrets.
The graves are level as the empty beds
That stand at home with unstirr'd coverlets;
Or as the prairie-turf the traveller treads
Where never spade has delved or ploughshare driven.

Our simple fathers in their church-yards old
O'er the loved dead heap'd up the grassy mound,
As they would shape the sleeper underground
For friends in dewy twilight to behold.
Oh fitting couch for grief to lean upon!
It caught an earlier greeting from the day,
A later blessing from the setting sun.
Earth's kindly sob it seem'd o'er kindred clay.
The heaving turf lay lightly on the mould.

But here the callous grass shows no more sorrow
Than o'er the drown'd the placid ocean-plain.
It swells not up to meet the eyes' sweet rain.
What footing may the mounting spirit borrow
From this roll'd flat? The dead are blotted out—
Buried, and earth no richer—vague their sleep!
We try to trace our own, almost in doubt
If they are there. To-day we idly weep,
Or faintly murmur of a golden morrow.

XII.

ONCE AND AGAIN.

ONCE as I stray'd a student, happiest then,
What time the Summer's garniture was on,
Beneath the princely shades of Kensington,
A girl I spied whose years might number ten,
With full round eyes, and fair soft English face.
A liveried lackey upon either side
Her palfrey walk'd afoot. With equal pace
Follow'd a mounted dame at distance wide.
They thrid the turfy paths scarce seen of men.

From the surroundings of the maiden-child
I guess'd her royal state and destiny.
Across the gulf which lay 'twixt her and me,
In those green alleys where the seasons smiled
Alike on both, though fortune most on her,
I dared to look, for she came slowly near.
Features like hers were radiant elsewhere.
Save for her high-bred pallor, calm and clear,
She might have bloom'd a flower on any wild.

Again I saw her. Alter'd was her mien.
A matron flush upon her aspect show'd
The high sun flaming on her noonday road.
One call'd her wife—some mother—millions Queen!
No more to her the small birds only sang.
The fluttering streets, as she went floating past,
Were bank'd with people whose hoarse voices rang
With loud 'VICTORIAS!' Ah the difference vast!—
The flaring city and the alleys green.

XIII.

HEREDITARY MONARCHY.

‘WHEREFORE,’ a vain boy ask’d, ‘should England own
A crown hereditary, to be conferr’d
Perchance on feeble brows?’ A sage who heard
Thus answer’d—‘Argued well: the great alone
Should hold great sway: our king of men should rule.
But which were king should twenty kings arise?
To know its greatest men the world is dull,
And to the loudest yields the largest prize.
Whom, with thy choice, would’st thou this hour enthrone?’

The unripe youth exclaim'd—'Can our brave land
Be barren ever of heroic men?

Live they not now, with sword, or tongue, or pen,
To prove their mighty title to command?'

'They live,' replied the sage, 'and in such force,
That each, in virtue of his kingly mood,
Heading a party fierce with faction's curse,
Would covet triumph through his country's blood,
Till order came but from a tyrant's hand.

'A mild and temper'd rule is England's dower,
Won from a wise and stubborn ancestry.
What safety for her charter of the free
In strong hands trembling with precarious power?
Our old inheritance be still our pride.
Happy the land where each may rise and shine,
From turmoil safe, uncaring to decide,
Which in the forest is the tallest pine,
Which in the garden is the fairest flower.'

XIV.

PASSED AWAY.

PEACE dwells at last with poor ELIZABETH,
Wife of my trusted friend. The end has come.
There is no tremulous voice to call him home;
And yet he goes, and sits alone with death,
Though useless now his tender ministries.
There is no fretting at his absence now;
Yet sits he by her side, and sadly tries
To gather soothing from her tranquil brow
And stony bosom without pulse or breath.

The fever'd watching has been all in vain;
The struggle now has ended in defeat:
Yet in her aspect is a rest so sweet
That were she waked she might again complain.
Oh who could wish to wring her human heart
With one pang more? But past is every fear:
Still'd by the mystery that would not start
Although a cannon thunder'd at her ear—
Although her little infant cried with pain.

Ah me! that one so beautiful should die!
Full on her widow'd husband ere she went,
Like light within a shatter'd tenement,
Linger'd the last love-lustre of her eye.
On the vague threshold of the unseen life
She paused; then feebly from her finger took
The golden circlet of the mortal wife,
Placed it on his, with re-assuring look,
And wedded him to immortality.

XV.

CONFIDENTIAL.

HIGH rose the noon. I had an hour to spare
In REGINALD's garden, trimm'd with matchless grace.
Warbled that day a spirit in the place,
Like music knowing that the flowers were fair;
And I was happy, but my friend was sad.
So spake I rallying—'Thou art out of tune
With this sweet Eden and its voices glad!
What wintry cloud should dim his sky of June,
Of health and fortune who has ample share?'

Sighing, he said—‘ A truth which many prove,
With me, too slowly fear’d, has come to pass.
As perilous for foot as adder’s grass
Are all the flowery ways of youthful love.’
‘ Sad fate,’ said I, ‘ to love in spite of scorn!’
‘ Thou judgest wrong,’ cried doleful REGINALD:
‘ Some leagues away a maiden pines forlorn;
Thither to soothe her I am hourly call’d;
Honour cries ‘ On!’ and yet I fail to move!’

More question’d I. At length he thus explain’d:—
‘ I have a cousin whom I once adored.
Ere yet I left my teens I long implored,
Until her girlish troth at last I gain’d—
By oaths which time has turn’d to perjuries!
Her beauty now is wither’d to my view,
But still her heart is faithful to my lies!
As I wax false she weareth doubly true:
Her love is torture now that mine has waned!’

XVI.

IN VAIN.

‘PITY,’ I said—as on a rustic form
We sat us down, myself and REGINALD,
Where happy birds their true loves madrigall’d—
‘Pity that in this nook, where frost and storm
Would seem unknown, the imps of ill should lurk,
Like fairy cankers in the velvet buds;
Pity that alien thoughts should inly work,
And gnaw with grief a maiden’s blushful moods,
As berries oft are hollow’d by a worm.

‘Helpless as clinging fruit upon the tree
She hung upon thy love. Say she has lost
Some outward bloom, through hopes delay’d and cross’d,
Hath it not gone to enrich her trust in thee
Beyond thy frail desert to parallel?
If haply some new beauty thou should’st wed,
That beauty faded, where will be its spell?
By oldest memory is love best fed,
As farthest founts swell largest to the sea.

‘Why should thy true love any longer seek
To wear the bashful beauty on her brow
Once woo’d and worshipp’d? Where thy whisper’d vow?
Flowers come when airs invite. Beauty as weak
As flowers or tears, the flattery should sip
That it is still the bribe of constant love.
Cheated of that it dies.’ Upon his lip
A passion trembled and with judgment strove;—
But left the lilies in the maiden’s cheek!

XVII.

ALONE.

So REGINALD is still a bachelor—
Not young, yet youthful—studious of his ease—
His only thought how best himself to please.
Of richest wines he has an endless store:
These are his pride, and oft as lovingly
As they were children he will tell their age.
His city house, his mansion by the sea,
Alternately his jovial hours engage.
So great his wealth it hourly groweth more.

A little luck, a little keen address,
A little kindly help in time of need,
A little industry and touch of greed,
Have made his life a singular success;
And he asks homage for his splendid gains,
Paying the flattery in meats and drinks!
Applauding friends he daily entertains,
To ease him of himself. Sometimes he thinks
If he were poor his friends might love him less.

Gray-headed REGINALD! he has royal parts,
And in all circles fills an honour'd seat.
Yet vain for him are maidens' accents sweet:
At wedded slavery and henpeck'd hearts
He jeers and laughs; though, when the nights are cold,
The tables empty, and he feels alone,
A memory breaks of purer joys of old;
And, selfish to the last, he thinks of one
Who might have soothed him with her gentle arts!

XVIII.

GENIUS AND PRESUMPTION.

A NOISE of talk was in the public ways.
One had arrived the city's votes to claim,
At whose approach the invisible tramp of Fame
Blew into life the echoes of all praise.
His song had stirr'd the dust of buried Rome;
His pen in England's annals had struck life;
His voice had made a muttering Senate dumb.
Lo! a throng'd hall, with expectation rife,
And ears attent, and eyes of eager gaze!

MACAULAY rose;—a man of sturdy build,
With ageing hair, and face of dusky hue
Lit up with restless eyes of luminous blue;
His frame erect as with disdain to yield
To the high task to which it was upnerved.
In the first lull of welcome and applause,
His voice bespoke a soul that never swerved
In its devotion to a chosen cause,
And all the admiring multitude was thrill'd.

His arguments like deftly-wielded swords
Flash'd and struck home. When he resumed his seat,
A demagogue rose grimly to his feet,
And flung his pittance 'gainst the master's hoards
Of thought and knowledge;—clamour'd down, yet cool,
He yelp'd in tones of ignorant dispute!
Oh much I marvell'd at the matchless fool!—
I so content to listen, humbly mute,
And gather wisdom from the great man's words.

XIX.

POSTHUMOUS.

SHE sat where sorrow is content to dwell;
From pious words she drew unwonted calm;
Her voice was lowly in the shouted psalm,
As the low murmur of an empty shell
That to one ear breathes out its heart of sighs;
In crape and cambric she was chastely clad,
But most she wore her mourning in her eyes:
Close by her side a lovely boy she had,
Who raised his forehead's calm her grief to quell.

Like one who by the troubled orbs makes guess
Of where an unseen planet shines afar,
By her emotion I could trace a star
Hid in the secret Heaven. Her pale distress
Bore record of a love no cloud could dim—
A sweet betrothal kiss—a burning vow—
A trembling marriage blissful to the brim—
A sheltering arm—a calm advising brow—
A death, a burial, and a loneliness.

What was the lost one like? The boy, I ween,
Reveal'd the features of his countenance
To me as to the mother's mindful glance.
Even as a painter's practised eye may glean
Looks of the dead from living semblances,
To clothe the child with age I straight began,
Adding time's mellowing touches by degrees,
Until my mind caught vision of the man—
The buried man whom I had never seen.

XX.

THE CROWN OF SONG.

IN days when monarchs fought and minstrels sang,
The harp was oft-times stronger than the sword:
It urged the patriot cause, and wing'd the word
That flash'd a glory on the combat's clang:
Its music was a nation's sympathy,
Present applause, and Fame's enduring crown:
Prompter and prize of high-plumed chivalry,
War's shout, love's sigh, wound's balm, and death's renown—
How ring the names in Chevy-Chase that rang!

All records of brave deeds are poor and tame
To the full trumpet-notes by poets blown.
In many a stately tomb they rest unknown,
Lost to true hearts, and dead to perfect fame,
Whom no immortal of the Muses' court
In any deathless lay has sung aloud.
Fame, Fame! how is thy votary thy sport!—
To-day the idol of the shouting crowd—
To-morrow but the phantom of a name!

O England! when has mighty son of thine
Been loved and mourn'd like thy dead WELLINGTON?
From field and council is our hero gone,
But who may weave his crown of song divine?
We vow in bronze his memory shall endure,
And lo! a kingdom's tears upon his pall!
Yet on Corunna's height immortal MOORE
In WOLFE's fine verse has nobler funeral;
And NELSON livelier lives in CAMPBELL's line.

XXI.

WAR.

ALMOST twice twenty years of sweet repose
Had bless'd our land—when, hark! a cry of war
Clang'd through the isles. Muscovy's towering CZAR,
Whetted for conquest of his Moslem foes,
Had smitten Europe with a tyrant's glaive!
The shock that palsied Almayne with alarms,
Drew answering echoes from the Western wave;
The martial blood of France flew fierce to arms,
And England's chivalry in transport rose!

In cot and hall were women's looks aghast,
And manly hearts unmann'd in love's embrace;
Blind hurried partings left their scalding trace
On cheeks soon to be dried against the blast
Which stream'd a hundred pennants to the skies.
From clamorous shores went forth our arm'd host;
Piedmont waken'd at their battle-cries;
While on their side were murder'd Poland's ghost,
And Hungary's tears, and songs of triumphs past!

Anon the clouds of war in thunder broke,
Lighting with baleful flames the Baltic flood,
Drenching the fierce Crimean land with blood,
And murking Asia's plains with sulphurous smoke!
The storm boom'd on. At length, when all were tired
Of mutual slaughter's awful holocaust,
Came words of truce. A glad salute was fired;
Rock'd every steeple; flutter'd every mast;
And in a grateful calm the world awoke.

XXII.

AFTER THE FIGHT.

TIME's shore, that glisten'd in the sweet light shed
Of peace new-dawning in the turban'd East,
Was strewn with dead. Who spread the vulture-feast
Himself was dead—great NICHOLAS was dead.
Dead were ST. ARNAUD, RAGLAN high of mind,
And bold CATHCART. Dead, dead to all but fame,
Were thousands butcher'd. Where the wounded pined,
England's brave daughter of the tuneful name,
Fair NIGHTINGALE her nursing sisters led.

What loves and hopes were hush'd beneath the blooms
That grew beyond the stormy Euxine's flood!
What gain had Europe from her drench of blood?
What fruit to show, save one sad hill of tombs?
Our bronzed and bearded warriors from the fight
Made England stand up strong within her seas;—
But flash'd no prestige of a higher might
From those who fell on fiery Chersonese?
Or sprang but barren glory from their dooms?

Thanks be to God, who made us what we are!
He fixed our fate—to lapse in languid age,
Or suffer grandly on a tragic stage.
The scowl of tyranny in King or Czar,
Quails at the proud defiance of an eye
Illumined with a fire of martyrdom.
Man wrong'd feels most his immortality,
And holds life worthless to the general sum
Of freedoms nurtured with the blood of war.

XXIII.

CONSOLATION.

WEEP, lonely eyes! whose seeing is in vain.
Weep, widow'd eyes! that may as well be blind.
The ships that come, uncared of any wind,
Bring many a manly shout and martial strain;
The wharfs are throng'd;—but you are lonely still!
Yet were it well to soothe your wilder sobs—
To gather calm from CATHCART'S sacred Hill,
And wear the sovereign grief that hides its throbs,
With wet-pressed fingers on the lips of pain.

In fancy I have listen'd to your moans:
They who had thrill'd you with their meeting cheers
Rest far away, beyond your reach of tears!
What public gain for your great woe atones?
Yet towers our queenly England calm and fair:
Well knew her sons the fealty they should give;
Unlacing fond arms at the trumpet's blare,
They dared to die that liberty might live,
And built us ramparts of heroic bones!

Who knows that herds might browse on peaceful downs,
Or rustling Autumn spread her mellow crops
For the glad sickle, over straths and slopes,
By happy hamlets and laborious towns,
Save for the guarding of our heroes' deeds?
Still, 'neath her ribs of valour England's heart
Beats to a tender tune when valour bleeds:
She takes the warrior's, then the widow's part,
And gilds with homely love her high renowns!

XXIV.

THE MAJORITY.

I have been trying, half a rainy day,
To count how many of my friends are dead;
How many live life's mazy way to tread;
And which are most—the seal'd in senseless clay,
Or they to whom the bland winds minister.
The larger number have their sacred lodge
In marble darkness of the sepulchre,
Or blinding light beyond. Wherefore I judge
That, on my journey, I am past midway.

And so, like one whose bulk of kin have gone
To some far land, returning nevermore,
Who wistful looks unto that other shore
As to his ultimate goal, yet would postpone
His voyage thither, having fond hearts left
Awhile to bind him to his native strand,
I think of those gone first; yet, unbereft
Of many a seeking eye and clasping hand,
I linger here, though white hands wave me on.

Oft as our trusting darlings to the fold
Of the Eternal Shepherd are removed,
Our links are loosen'd with the world we loved.
The earth is thinly peopled to the old;—
Sad anniversaries this truth avouch:
Yet soothing are the ills that by degrees
Make the grave welcome as tired labour's couch;
The cautery is kind that kills disease;
With breath of sighs truth's mottoes are unroll'd.

XXV.

CHANGED SCENES.

WHERE first my life its prattling course began,
Offended Nature gather'd up her sweets;
Labour and commerce and invading streets,
The slow sure progress of the conqueror man,
Threw doom of exile on the trampled grass;
Blotting the sky the smoky banners curl'd
Of toil exulting; slopes where once might pass
The herd's lone life were throng'd; the sunny world
Of birds was crush'd; the waters darkling ran.

Yet even within the batter'd thoroughfare,
Flowers of the youthful heart to beauty spring,
And root themselves in stones; the bright-faced ring
Of children in the city's gaslight glare
Gives out a voice of mirth as unsubdued
As greets the awakening stars on village-green.
So from the seasons in their bounteous mood,
Though scarce a greening bough might cheer the scene,
My heart drew Summer gladness unaware.

Now, only now, alas! a sorrow clouds
My lapsing days, to think that not a spot
Unchanged remains, by memory unforget,
Where I at last might rest away from crowds.
I mark the old man of the hamlet's love
For his first play-ground and his final bed.
'Mong scenes of change my heart can only move,
'Mong unfamiliar scenes my footsteps tread,
And alien seems my home of dust and shrouds.

XXVI.

ASPIRATION.

OH for a garden-croft of wholesome mould,
Small for my culture, whither I might hie,
Ere the day-lily opes its darling eye,
And whence, at waking of the marigold,
Flush'd with the roseate dawn, to my first meal
I might return with zest my boyhood knew!
My heart is sick for Nature, for I feel
Fallen out of harmony with her flowers and dew,
And guggling wells, and musics manifold.

Last night I read the whole that I have writ,
Trying to wean me from my poet's dream.
I have been blowing bubbles on the stream
Of fretted Castaly. Fancy and wit
Are dull'd and mudded at their finer fount.
Yet through a dreary waste of days o'erworn,
Sighing of frailest things to swell the amount,
How many souls, in light of music born,
Sing to themselves, for other joy unfit!

How many stretch vain wings while doom'd to plod
'Mong limed themes that snare the soul to earth!
In bloomy Paradise had Adam birth:
Say, does a memory of his first abode
Linger with man? Oft do I yearn to find
A calm retreat where Summer spreads her gains,
Where the hand's toil might ease the jaded mind,
And where as freely forth might flow my strains
As ploughman's whistle on a moorland road.

XXVII.

F A M E.

IF I must mourn my Spring of being past,
My older life should boast fresh wealth of flowers—
Adornings of the sunnier Summer hours
Of manhood's ripeness—thoughts more thickly cast
In richer fields of memory to bloom,
And catch a glory from diviner skies.
Yet falls a shadow of the coming doom,
As of a gathering cloud on all I prize—
A sense of loosening leaves and threatening blast.

Great ALEXANDER conquer'd half the earth,
Yet died in youth; and mighty CÆSAR wept
To think that he had lived like years, nor leapt
Into the arms of Fame. To feel a dearth
Of fruitage in our lives and springtime gone,
Is bitter grief. To gardens, fields, and woods,
Springtime returns; but ah! life's vernal sun
Comes not again to melt the wintry moods
Of hearts unhappy for a second birth.

And where are they who wing'd my callow muse
With words that wore a light of prophecy,
When hope was strong to mould its own decree,
And shape immortal futures? Ah to lose
Such ministrants to effort! By my side
Their torches sicken'd. Now that these are out,
All fame were dark, for theirs had been the pride,
Save that one liveth still to list its shout,
Or for its silence coin some sweet excuse.

XXVIII.

UNWRITTEN FANCIES.

IN my young Summers, comrade of my noons
Of truant ramblings to the distant fields,
Where the coy linnets had their leafy biolds,
Was a fair boy, who, as swift liquid tunes
Gush'd to the air and made it beautiful,
Would pause and listen with delight unbreathed.
Fine lessons conn'd we in that ample school,
And, graduates of Nature, oft we wreathed
Sweet-vision'd laurels through the flowery Junes.

He had a heart as liberal to give
As Autumn, that unask'd by any wind
Drops richest fruit. His natural bent of mind
Was towards bright virtue, as the sensitive
Spirit of growth in trees is towards the light.
Beauty incarnating immortal love
He worshipp'd. In his creed the stars of night
Were God's own lamps, hung in the void above
To calm the shuddering fears of all who live.

In mountain solitudes he sang his fill,
But to the world was dumb as the shy stream,
That o'er the populous plain pursues its dream,
And leaves its music on the lonely hill.
Oh world of wealth and waste—of loved and spurn'd!
How many fancies are as fleeting breaths,
Or last year's leaves, or lovely eyes that burn'd
In skulls that now are dust! Yet o'er such deaths
Awakes the myriad life that pulses still.

XXIX.

TOO MUCH WE MARVEL.

Too much we marvel at the things of old.
Too much we deem that Grecian love is dead;
That Roman matrons are no longer bred;
That modern woman's wiles are tame and cold,
Compared with those that made the gorgeous East
A lap where valour slept and lost a crown.
Too much we fancy life a vulgar feast;
That love's romance lives but in old renown,
And in the passionate tales by poets told.

Never a glow of rapture would arise,
Never a tear of sorrow would descend,
O'er stories always read unto the end,
But that they stir some hidden fount that lies
In the universal bosom. If not kin
To the immortals of the vanish'd ages,
How do we take their joys and sorrows in,
Live o'er their loves in bright historic pages,
And bridge the centuries to blend our sighs?

Long have I learn'd of common life to prove
That in secluded nooks, where no storm comes—
In the recesses of well-order'd homes,
With all the etiquettes serene above,
Passion survives, and burns, and yearns for wings;
That to our sober world there still are given
Enraptured SAPPHOS striking golden strings,
Distress'd LUCRETIAS going pure to Heaven,
And CLEOPATRAS making sovereign love.

XXX.

SUNSHINE AND STORM.

‘O JULIA! if a love no death can sever,
But stretching wings of hope beyond the grave
Content thy wish, Fate’s self shall be thy slave:
Small means well spent will prove the bounteous Giver,
While endless wealth will sparkle in our books,
And in the rapture of my JULIA’s eyes.’
Content and pride were in the maiden’s looks;
Her clasps and kisses made divine replies;
And HENRY felt she was his own forever.

Was it not he who, as a gracious knight
Curbs his steed proudly, rein'd his temper in;
Whose simple presence was rebuke to sin;
Whose manly charity was death to spite;
Who look'd on mortal foibles with a glance
Of tenderness; who knew to list as well
As to discourse with kingly utterance;
Who scorn'd to wound where if a harsh word fell
The wound were deadly as the adder's bite?

To greatest minds the least is ever known
Of their own greatness. Theirs the towering thought
That dwarfs each noble deed themselves have wrought.
Likest to God, and nearest to his throne,
Are they who under blatant calumnies
Keep mute the tongue can fulmine to the skies
For others' right; whom simple pleasures please;
And who, o'er heights of toil and sacrifice,
Find their chief meed in thoughts of duty done.

XXXVII.

HEART-ACHE.

WHAT simple fools the tender passion makes
Of many a goodly youth! Friend CHARLES, I know
The coil that chafes thee;—I have guess'd thy woe.
Thou lov'st where love the fever'd motion takes
Of torturing doubt. The proud LISETTE has charms
As sparkling as Aurora's pearly gleams:
Oh that her cincture were thy seeking arms!
Yet when thou fain would'st clasp her in thy dreams,
She is gone like Summer mist when morn awakes.

When thou would'st spurn her as a maid forsworn,
She calms thy jealous frenzy with a smile:
When thou would'st hang thy faith upon her wile,
Her looks are cold, and thou art quite forlorn.
Poor page! that bendest to her beckoning brow
When she would teach the world her beauty's state,
Her brooch or bracelet is as prized as thou!
She is a tyrant whom thy pride should hate:
She is a mocker whom thy truth should scorn.

Of thy own worth thy sense must be as slight
As of its precious freight the carrier-dove:
Why wreck the treasure of so great a love
On one who draweth from thy pain delight?
Leave her alone, a mark for any blast.
Win a true heart, where comes nor storm nor cold:
So shall thy life, its perilous trial past,
Be as a billow by the headlands roll'd
To silvery ripples in the shelter'd bight.

XXXVIII.

EPITHALAMIUM.

SHE is thine at last—thy own adoring wife!
Thank the dear God for so divine a boon.
Heaven opes its beauty on thy honeymoon:
Thou see'st the light that when thy mortal strife
Is ended may be thine for evermore.
So full of happiness, thy bosom now
Can hold no pain: thou wert asleep before,
With dreams of anguish working on thy brow:
Thou now hast waken'd to a finer life.

Long hast thou look'd into thy EMMA's eyes,
And gather'd calm to make thy spirit strong:
Nor sneer of worldly pride, nor word of wrong,
Can move thee more to secret pangs and sighs,
For thou art shelter'd in the whitest arms
That ever trembled at a great heart's beating.
Already thou'rt in heaven—above all harms—
Above all envious darts, as vain and fleeting
As arrows aim'd at birds that sail the skies.

Thine own! thine own!—the heart is all surrender
That at thy first coy meeting throb'd with fear.
Life's ills are elsewhere; its bliss is here—
Here in a love as exquisite and tender
As ever ripen'd to consummate flower.
Should rapture soar upon a fleeting wing,
Thine be the deeper joy of calmer hour;—
A balm for every ache that age may bring,
And for the gloom of death a dream of splendour.

XXXIX.

IN THE STREET.

A HERD of beeves chokes up the angry street,
Goaded by brutal hands; while, following near,
Some dingy sheep press on in huddling fear—
For tranquil pastures making piteous bleat.
Hemm'd in by snarling dogs, helpless, at bay,
'Mid alien crowds, and no green peep of home,
All stagger feebly past. Ah! happy they
If haunted by no vision of the doom
To which they go with blind reluctant feet!

Sad sight, alas! If righteous, who can tell?
Feeling is weak: God may have sent man food
In living shape, with finely pulsing blood,
And eyes of dumb appeal. Here, where I dwell,
The hunted mouse is murder'd in my sight.
Though arm'd for protests of defensive strife,
Small for concealment, or alert for flight,
On earth—in sea—in air, life preys on life:
In the red shambles all perhaps is well.

Yet from the ensanguined histories of time
Prate we content of Heaven's obscure decrees,
And take God's sanction for man's madnesses?
Feel we not rather the strong hate of crime
As our true monitor? So I, recluse
But sad and watchful as these poor brutes pass,
Even when I judge their flesh for human use,
Am fain to wish them happy on the grass—
Myself their shepherd making grateful rhyme.

XL.

THE REVOLT.

Lo! where the Ganges winds through burning plains,
The awful banner of revolt unfurl'd!
God! will the demon fires that fright the world
Ne'er smoulder out? Must tears like thunder-rains
Still weep the lightning's ravage? England's sons,
And more, her shuddering babes and shrieking daughters,
Have found such woe as the chaste daylight shuns:
Post follows post with tales of wrongs and slaughters,
Till vengeance riots in the Christian's veins.

Oh! dusky warriors of a fiery land,
If our brave slain were strangers to your tongue,
And could not move you with the accents wrung
From lips that quiver'd at a lost command;
If vain their pleading to your alien ears
As tortured billows the deaf rocks assailing;
Was there no eloquence in woman's tears,
Or in sick childhood's self-translated wailing,
That were you human you might understand?

In grief we look'd upon our loving ones,
And call'd them by their dearest household names:
How had we felt had these, 'mid shrieks and shames,
Found murder mercy under distant suns?
Britannia shudders and a moment weeps;
Then rising sudden, with her eyes a-glow,
Hurls all her thunders from her giant steepes;
Yet, ere one bolt from home has struck the foe,
Far Delhi crumbles under English guns.

XLI.

VICTORY.

WE heard the wild roar of the cannonade
In broken dreams; and, 'mid the clearing smoke—
Oh never daylight on such horror broke!—
Saw mangled limbs of matron and of maid,
To insult dead, with flesh of innocents
By hell-kites torn. But lo! the hot air shook
With storm of steel, nor peace in British tents
Dwelt till for every gash a blow was struck,
And for each clotted tress a life had paid.

Honour to CAMPBELL and the dauntless brave!
Tears, tears for HAVELOCK, whose heroic brand,
From startled sheath sprang flaming to his hand,
And scatter'd lightnings to avenge and save!
Woe to the traitors! well they play'd their parts:
Theirs were the triumphs which a world abhors:
We gave them British arms; but British hearts
Beat in the bosoms of the conquerors
Who drove them howling to a felon grave.

Oh clotted tresses of the lost and loved!
Oh small gash'd hands that with the ringlets twined!
The fiery eyes of Vengeance' self are blind
With scalding tears. Yet, by fell suffering proved,
How England towers a giant to the world!
Weeping her loved ones slaughter'd, and the fate
Of HAVELOCK, NIELL, and NICHOLSON,—while hurl'd
Her vengeance on the foe, in pride of hate,
Her foot on India's neck, she stands unmoved.

XLII.

WHEN?

WHEN will it come?—the grand and gracious time
When the mild light that fills our Christian hearths—
Born of good books, and happy household mirths,
And poets' dreamings of the peaceful prime—
Will steal like morning through the city lanes
And tame the angers that make Virtue sad;
Thence spread a noontide glory o'er the plains
Where foes are met, till faces passion-mad
Relax and brighten to a love sublime?

When will it come?—the reign of judgment cool,
When truth and right shall compass in one band
All isles and continents?—when every land
Shall glow with worship of the beautiful
In nature, virtue, charity, and God?—
When kindred, one in love through divers paths,
Shall have their semblances in States abroad—
And, as in households strange to hates and wraths,
The world's one code shall be the Golden Rule?

When will it come?—the age when to their den
Rapine, and lust, and murder shall be scared?
Still by our warriors must the sword be bared
Against the grim assaults of savage men?
Is the dream vain that, in some far-off year,
In its own saintly lustre panoplied,
Goodness shall walk the world without a fear?
When will it come,—the proudly prophesied?
Lord! Lord of Destiny! make answer, When?

XLIII.

THE RESUMPTION.

FULL many days I laid my Muse asleep,
Not through suspicion of a barren age,
For ever on my near world's shifting stage
Went by a pageant, with the phantom sweep
Of endless sorrow eased by eyes divine;
But those about me read no rhyméd books,
Nor hung heart-charm'd on any magic line;
My thoughts took worldly colour from their looks,
And worldly gains were all I cared to reap.

Proud Poesy drew back with face of shame
To see me temper'd to a servile yoke.
Yet, while I shared the social evening joke,
And loves and laughters to delight me came,
Was I not happy? Wherefore waste the years
A shy itinerant in the groves of song?
Even as a half-built house, when frost appears,
My rhyme stood still, and in the common throng
I moved unmindful of my nobler aim.

Yet once again! A lustrous eve it was
Of opening lights. For host, a friend I had,
Who, 'mid a round of faces fair and glad,
Shook off a learned load of forms and laws.
The talk was genial, letter'd, and o'erflush'd
With radiance caught from dreamy TENNYSON.
That night, beneath the stars, I felt all hush'd
At echo of a strain long-time begun,
And secret thrill of a remote applause.

XLIV.

WHERE ARE THE FRIENDS?

WHERE are the fearless friends who once were mine?
Can they be sleeping under earthy mounds
Who travell'd with me through the dim profounds
Of speculation upon things divine?—
Who, thorough Poesy's enchanted meads,
Were my companions many a blissful eve?—
With whom I pierced the veil of mystic creeds,
And, nigher God, first learn'd in joy to weave
The lay I offer at a dearer shrine?

Of the same waters drank we; and, in sooth,
So small our stature, and so lofty grew
The jewell'd herbage, we could nothing view
Beyond our teeming oasis of youth.
Embosom'd in a world of greenery,
Only when looking upward had we scope
To range at will. We saw an azure sea
Beacon'd with stars. Ah! blindly now I grope
O'er desert wastes for blessed wells of truth.

O Heaven! how brief the span that lies before!
How have I profited this tract of time?
What have I done of deathless deed or rhyme
To be a joy of life for evermore?
If comes the seal at last of turf or stone,
Whence the wild wish round this death-fated clay,
With creeping age like Winter o'er me blown,
To feel the buds of a perennial May?
Shower down, ye stars! the ardent creeds of yore!

XLV.

THE INEVITABLE.

A GRIM and shadowy shape forever stands
In front of all humanity. He keeps
Watch for the sailor on the treacherous deeps:
His breath is heavy on the sultry lands.
The bribe of wealth, fair beauty's pleading tears,
Are vain to stay him; vain, too, is the appeal
Of infant's innocence or age's fears.
There is no heart beneath his ribs to feel—
No yielding flesh upon his knotted hands.

Man soars into the wide eternities
Till, wilder'd in their awful solitudes,
He shrinks for soothing to the homely moods
Of womanly affection, and the wise
Calm faith of childhood, and the love display'd
In the familiar smile the season wears.
Yet soon the summons of the dreaded shade
Turns all his yearnings to intense despairs,
And all his beckoning dreams to ghastly lies.

What glowing heights of bliss were in the scope
Of aimful youth, if years would give him play!—
A knowledge wide as night and bright as day
Flickers like boreal flame about the cope
Of his soul's heaven. What wondrous orbs revolve
By him unmark'd! What lands around are spread
Unvisited! What truths he fain would solve
Are hid in tongues unlearn'd and books unread!—
Oh life, how short without the afterhope!

XLVI.

TOO EAGER.

THERE lived—I saw him oft—a studious man,
Who burrow'd secrets from the hearts of stones—
Dug from the stubborn rock dim wrecks of bones—
And of the world, ere ADAM'S race began,
Bade them discourse in strangely living shapes;
Till, musing thus, in dreams unsooth'd by sleep,
He saw, 'mid slimy wastes, fair isles and capes
Heaved up in pearly splendour from the deep,
And shining rills adown their sides that ran.

Alone with God he walk'd where the young past
Leapt into being. With far-prying look
He burn'd for light to cast on Moses' book.
Creation grew around him vague and vast.
How days were ages, and great ages days,
He, MILLER, sang in unrhymed mystic strain,
Till, spying a beyond that mock'd his gaze,
He stagger'd onward with a wilder'd brain,
And burst life's gates to learn the truth at last.

In the thick eve is heard a whirl of wings
Toward their sure nests. So may they make for home,
Who feel the aches of brain that madly come
Of baffled wanderings 'mong the shadowy things
Couch'd in far twilights of the infinite.
Time without end and distance without bound
Blind and bewilder our poor reach of sight.
God walks beside us upon common ground,
And to the near and known meek wisdom clings.

XLVII.

SABBATH IN THE COUNTRY.

I LEAVE the church. It is a fair May morn.
The preacher's voice is frantic in my ears.
Earnest his aim to waken holy fears;—
Yet this bright hour I cannot choose but turn
From the majestic agony of words,
Lurid with curses of eternal woe,
To the cool purl of brooks, the chirm of birds,
The oderous meanings in the flowers that blow,
And endless blessings of God's sweet love born.

The storm sweeps by; and lo! a zephyr fine
Dallies delighted with the flowery earth:
The hot volcano has a fierce brief birth,
And soon its ashes cool beneath the vine:
Pain is a little hour and health a life:
There is no anguish on the dead man's face:
Heaven sends a healing for all mortal strife:
The lightning flashes but a moment's space:
The stars through all the ages sweetly shine.

Yet what is Death? Why are we ever dull
In luminous face of such a universe?
Ah me! the shadow of the sable hearse
Falls like a cloud on hopes we yearn to cull
As bearing treasure of prophetic light.
Oh for a glimmer in our mortal gloom!
Oh for a voice of soothing in the night!
Oh for a hand with flowers of heavenly bloom
To make the grave divinely beautiful!

XLVIII.

THE GRAVE.

THE grave!—how wondrous is the eye of Faith,
That can contemplate where the loved one lies—
Track out through earth a pathway to the skies—
And clothe with angel wings the loathsome death!
Yet, if old miracles could vanquish doubt,
Not vainly would the acorn climb the air
A stately oak, nor even the flower bloom out,
Redeem'd from mould and worms, and strangely fair,
And crown'd with sweetness of its own sweet breath.

What are our miracles of human skill
But gleams divine reveal'd to mortal sense—
Rents in the veil that hides Omnipotence?
A vapour toils obedient to man's will:
The sun-limn'd picture shames the limner's art:
A word, a touch, and half the world is spann'd!
Each keeps its mystery in Nature's heart.
We only see what none may understand:
But that we see we might be dubious still.

Why stretch forth yearnings for the infinite,
Yet grope in darkness, stumbling by the way,
Calling forever for the perfect day,
Like BARTIMEUS for restored sight?
If CHRIST gives eyes our waking world to bless,
Why should life's torch the soothing heavens conceal?
Our hearts are bow'd with a sublime distress;
Yet death how beauteous, if its night reveal
A moon'd and starr'd eternity of light!

XLIX.

A CONTRAST.

Two friends are mine whose deeds all men approve;
Whose hearts are kindly as December hearths
When gladden'd with the immemorial mirths
Of dear old Christmas. Sights of suffering move
Both to quick tears. Their hands are prompt to give.
A word of falsehood or an act of wrong
Could come from neither. Knowing that to live
For others' good brings its own gain along,
Each reaps in blessings what he sows in love.

They have walk'd in charity a kindred way
Till near their end. But in the soul of one
A trouble lurks, for he has ponder'd on
Life, Death, and hovering Fate, till light is gray,
And gray is dark, and night-fears come apace.
He feels a weariness, and would be clad
In the grave's peace. Anon this wish gives place
To starward longings, whence he falls back sad,
Hugs the warm life he leaves, and fain would stay.

The other loves life well, but deems it vain.
Therefore he shapes a future in the skies,
And lives in comfort of its bright surprise
And dawn of victory over tears and pain,
With waiting friends and welcomes glorious.
When help is idle, he has words to aid.
He knows no doubt. Serene he labours thus,—
To live content, and not to die afraid.
Which dost thou envy of these aged twain?

L.

THE ECLIPSE.

BRIEF shadow of night's wing at noon of day—
Mantling with sickly hue the vales and hills,
Hushing the birds, and saddening all the rills,
And tempting some few stars of anxious ray
To dream their hour of vigil is at hand!
In dingy chambers falls a fearful gloom;
The labourer pauses on his twilight land
With puzzled fancies of a day of doom;
And crowds are staring in the open way.

What mask is that upon day's orb'd flame?
Is it indeed the moon that trails her night
Athwart day's face, as with a human spite
To obscure where rivalry she may not claim?
Ah! foolish to forsake her gentler throne
Where monthly she enjoy'd renew'd youth:
But lo! the shadow from the sun hath gone!
So passes error from a luminous truth—
So passes slander from a peerless name.

Great eye of day! this gloom our vision clears,
More than the mounting splendours of the dawn;
We see thee most when thou art most withdrawn,
Like God made visible by eclipse of tears!
Yet wert thou ever veil'd—ah then the close!—
Spring wildly weeping her unfolded buds,
And Nature maddening to a grave of woes!
But there is order in the rolling clouds,
And wondrous order in the circling spheres.

LI.

POETIC MELANCHOLY.

LIKE one who pleases by his merry jest,
And urges laughter to the verge of pain,
Then, being call'd on, sings a melting strain
Of Doon or Yarrow, until every breast
O'erflows with pathos of his voice and looks,—
So I, who own me of the joyous brood,
Weave doleful rhymes, attuned like Summer brooks
To the soft sorrow of the poet's mood,
Thus seeming saddest when most truly blest.

Ever as human objects intervene
Sunshine makes shadow. Round our shining day,
And round each far-off star's seraphic ray
Crowds the vast darkness. Round the oasis green
Burn the dry desert sands. Death bounds all life
Like sleep all waking. In the festal rout,
'Mid flaming lights and mad orchestral strife,
Come thoughts of silent floors, the candles out,
And ghostly midnight over all the scene.

Now when my days go by serenely bright,
I own it luxury to dip at times
Into the dream-world of my musèd rhymes.
My griefs are old, and none are mine to-night.
I could laugh breezily with any friend—
Roar over RABELAIS' or FALSTAFF'S wit:
But laughters loud come idly to an end,
While by our dying couch pale thought will sit,
With heavenly eyes amid the quenching light.

LII.

UNDER THE WAVES.

THROUGH wilds of silent sea-grass, rock, and sand,
Where monsters swim and crawl—through slimy caves—
O'er peaks that cannot hear the sound of waves—
Low trails the Electric Wire from strand to strand,
Or festoons chasms wide-yawning and profound.
Darkling it trails 'mong shells and floating forms—
Over the dismal faces of the drown'd—
Cold fathoms down below the reach of storms,
Or tides deep-heaving at the moon's command.

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And on the mystic path of that fine line
Go wondrous messages. Far nations talk,
As near as arm-link'd lovers in their walk,
Through twice a thousand miles of awful brine!
Man's speech through ocean flits, like light express'd
Through the rent cloud. Knit be the hearts as now
The exulting shores of England and the West!
Proud Science wears a glory on her brow,
As newly-gifted with a power divine.

Marvel of modern days! Man's mastery
Is over Nature. By his sovereign skill
Her magic steeds are harness'd to his will:
Yet at his bidding while they course the sea,
In awed humility he needs must own
To claim the praise were impious and rash.
Great God! the miracle is thine alone!
Thine the fleet lightnings through the depths that flash;
And their wild secret dwells alone with Thee!

LIII.

THE NEW-YEAR.

It comes—another year! the voiceful tower
Proclaims its advent. I could look with tears
Upon the growing burden of the years,
But that a voice of childish joy has power
To scare the thoughtful shadows of the night.
Ah! well I mind me of the happy time
When I, too, hail'd each New-Year with delight—
With shouts that mingled with the midnight chime,
And drown'd with noise the pathos of the hour.

Time and soft song have made my sorrow sweet;
And of a hand I once might grasp and prize,
And of a face lit up with tender eyes,
Wherein the soul I loved had its clear seat,
A memory is left now calm and glad.
Solaced by song my secret tears are dry,
And all is beautiful where all was sad.
A channell'd grief my Muse has wander'd by,
And arch'd it o'er with flowers in tribute meet.

Mark how the eyes of little children fill
At every fancied wrong or petty loss:
Oh be it mine to bear each larger cross,
And at my manliest age have strongest will!
When life a daisied meadow round me lay,
Old people stood between me and the tomb:
Now that a rosy group hides life's decay
With garlands woven of the morning's bloom,
The world, through lapsing years, seems lovely still.

LIV.

WHEN I REFLECT.

WHEN I reflect that I was once a child,
Of check impatient as a mountain brook,
Prizing my ball more dearly than my book,
And spying beauty in the floweret wild
More than in any bloom the garden wears,
To me seems music in the playground's noise—
Hope for the truant who outruns his cares—
Study, not idleness, in wandering joys,
And Summer days beside the brooks beguiled.

When I reflect what errors held the place
Of the new truths for which I battle now—
What grief has sat upon the sternest brow,
What tears have wash'd the most repulsive face—
How through all clouds of ill the virtues shine—
How 'mong base rivalries and mean pretence,
Beats in each breast home-feelings like to mine,
I grow more tolerant of difference—
More large in charity to all my race.

When I reflect how Mammon's paradise
The serpent mars—how death is in the gold
Which men forego the friendly grasp to hold—
How Fortune murders with her siren kiss—
Yielding the power that tempts to foul abuse
And the sweet founts of charity upsealing,
I prize the wealth that's given for simple use,
Not overmuch to choke the springs of feeling,
But for content enough. Content is bliss.

LV.

MIDDLE AGE.

FAIR time of calm resolve—of sober thought!
Quiet half-way hostelry on life's long road,
In which to rest and re-adjust our load!
High table-land, to which we have been brought
By stumbling steps of ill-directed toil!
Season when not to achieve is to despair!
Last field for us of a full fruitful soil!
Only spring-tide our freighted aims to bear
Onward to all our yearning dreams have sought!

How art thou changed! Once to our youthful eyes
Thin silvering locks and thought's imprinted lines,
Of sloping age gave weird and wintry signs;
But now these trophies ours, we recognise
Only a voice faint-rippling to its shore,
And a weak tottering step as marks of eld.
None are so far but some are on before:
Thus still at distance is the goal beheld,
And to improve the way is truly wise.

Farewell, ye blossom'd hedges! and the deep
Thick green of Summer on the matted bough!
The languid Autumn mellows round us now:
Yet fancy may its vernal beauties keep,
Like holly leaves for a December wreath.
To take this gift of life with trusting hands,
And star with heavenly hopes the night of death,
Is all that poor humanity demands
To hush its meaner fears in easy sleep.

MISCELLANEOUS.



MISCELLANEOUS.

SORROW AND SONG.

WEEP not over Poet's wrong,
Mourn not his mischances,—
Sorrow is the source of song,
And of gentle fancies.

Rills o'er rocky beds are borne,
Ere they gush in whiteness;
Pebbles are wave-chafed and worn,
Ere they show their brightness.

Sweetest gleam the morning flowers
When in tears they waken;
Earth enjoys refreshing showers
When the boughs are shaken.

Ceylon's glistening pearls are sought
In its deepest waters;
From the darkest mines are brought
Gems for beauty's daughters.

Through the rent and shiver'd rock
Limpid water breaketh;
'Tis but when the chords are struck
That their music waketh.

Flowers by heedless footstep press'd,
All their sweets surrender;
Gold must brook the fiery test,
Ere it shows its splendour.

When the twilight cold and damp
Gloom and silence bringeth,
Then the glow-worm lights its lamp,
And the night-bird singeth.

Stars come forth when Night her shroud
Draws as daylight fainteth;
Only on the tearful cloud
God his rainbow painteth.

Weep not, then, o'er Poet's wrong,
Mourn not his mischances,—
Sorrow is the source of song,
And of gentle fancies.

FIRST GRIEF.

THEY tell me, first and early love
 Outlives all after-dreams;
But the memory of a first great grief
 To me more lasting seems;
The grief that marks our dawning youth
 To memory ever clings,
And o'er the path of future years
 A lengthen'd shadow flings.

Oh, oft my mind recalls the hour,
 When to my father's home
Death came—an uninvited guest—
 From his dwelling in the tomb!

I had not seen his face before—

I shudder'd at the sight;

And I shudder yet to think upon

The anguish of that night.

A youthful brow and ruddy cheek

Became all cold and wan—

An eye grew dim in which the light

Of radiant fancy shone.

Cold was the cheek, and cold the brow—

The eye was fix'd and dim;

And one there mourn'd a brother dead,

Who would have died for him.

I know not if 'twas Summer then,

I know not if 'twas Spring;

But if the birds sang on the trees,

I did not hear them sing!

If flowers came forth to deck the earth,

Their bloom I did not see—

I look'd upon one wither'd flower,
And none else bloom'd for me.

A sad and silent time it was
Within that house of woe;
All eyes were dull and overcast,
And every voice was low;—
And from each cheek at intervals
The blood appear'd to start,
As if recall'd in sudden haste,
To aid the sinking heart.

Softly we trode, as if afraid
To mar the sleeper's sleep,
And stole last looks of his pale face
For memory to keep.
With him the agony was o'er;
And now the pain was ours,
As thoughts of his sweet childhood rose
Like odour from dead flowers.

And when at last he was borne afar
From the world's weary strife,
How oft in thought did we again
Live o'er his little life!—
His every look—his every word—
His very voice's tone
Came back to us, like things whose worth
Is only prized when gone.

That grief has pass'd with years away,
And joy has been my lot;
But the one is oft remember'd,
And the other soon forgot.
The gayest hours trip lightly by,
And leave the faintest trace;
But the deep, deep track that sorrow wears
Time never can efface.

THE SKY-LARK.

WHITHER away, proud bird? is not thy home

On earth's low breast?

And when thou'rt wearied, whither wilt thou come

To be at rest?

Whither away? the earth with Summer bloom

Is newly dress'd!

From the soft herbage thou hast brush'd in showers

The glittering dew,

And upward sprung to greet the blue-eyed Hours

Seen peeping through!

Has earth no spell to bind? have wilding flowers

No power to woo?

Haply thou'st gazed through the long gloom of night

On some fair star,

Yet dreaded to pursue a darkling flight

Untried—afar,

And now ascend'st to track by morning's light

Her silver car!

Haply to thee alone 'tis given to hear,

In echoes dim,

The strains sublimely chanted in the ear

Of seraphim!

Till, fill'd with holy rapture, thou draw'st near

To join their hymn!

Or, knowing whence sweet inspiration's given,

This morn, as wont,

Perchance with eager pinion thou hast striven

On high to mount,

That thou might'st drink the sacred stream from heaven,

Fresh at its fount!

Rapt flutterer! I partake thy high delight—

Thy holy thrill;—

Upward and upward in thy tuneful flight,

Thou soar'st at will!

Perch'd on the highest point of heavenward sight,

I see thee still!

Oh marvellous! that thou, a thing so small,

The air should'st flood

With sound so affluent and musical!

Most tiny cloud

In the blue sky, raining o'er earth's green ball

Music aloud!

What ear such sweet enchanting melody

Could ever cloy?

The pulsing air, high-heaved with ecstasy,

Thy wings up-buoy!

Methinks the morning has commission'd thee

To speak its joy!

Now that the early mists are all withdrawn,

What wealth is ours!

A liquid silver glistens on the lawn,

And on the flowers—

As if the stars had melted in the dawn

And fallen in showers.

Glad Nature seems the freshness to partake

Of Eden's birth,

And every sound that hails the morning's break

Has tones of mirth;

While thou, to sing the glorious day awake,

Soar'st high o'er earth!

God of the Morning! what new glories rise

Our hearts to bow!

Thou madest the lark a preacher in the skies—

I hear it now!

The air is fill'd with wondrous harmonies—

Their author Thou!

BY THE SEA-SIDE.

On thy fancy, gentle friend! come listen while I paint
A little sea-side village, with its houses old and quaint,
With a range of hills behind, and a rocky beach before,
And a mountain-circled sea lying flat from shore to shore,
Like a molten metal floor.

The noon is faint with splendour; the sails are hanging slack;
The steamer, pass'd an hour ago, has left a foamy track;
The fisher's skiff is motionless at anchor in the bay;
The tall ship in the offing has been idling all the day,
Where yesternight it lay.

There is not breath enough to wake an infant wave from sleep;
A dreamy haze is on the hills and on the shimmering deep;

The rower slackens in his toil, and basks within his boat;
On the dry grass the student sprawls too indolent to note
The glory that's afloat.

Round my throne of rock and heather the fat bee reels
and hums;
The liquid whistle of some bird from the near hillside
comes;
All else is silence on the beach, and silence on the brine,
And tranquil bliss in many a heart, yet sudden grief in mine
To mark a stranger pine.

He is young, with youth departed; moist death is on his
cheek;
They have borne him out into the sun a little health to
seek;—
An old man, and a mother, and a maid with yearning eyes;
They smile whene'er they talk to him; he smiles when
he replies;
Despair takes that disguise.

Long months of weary watching o'er a patient bed of pain—
The light held softly backward that might show all watch-
ing vain—

With footsteps hush'd, and awful fears unbreathed except
in prayer,

And healing draughts that would not heal, and whisper-
ings on the stair,

Are imaged meekly there.

Oh picture sad to be so set in a golden frame of God!

Alas! those sorrowing faces, and such loveliness abroad!

I look a little forward, and I spy a wider woe—

The heather wet and wither'd, and the waters moaning low,

And a church-yard white with snow.

Yet seems it well, my thoughtful friend, to cheer that dying eye

With witness of the spousals of the glowing earth and sky,—

To lap that frail immortal in the year's delicious prime,

And nurse him into dreamings of the bright celestial clime,

Ere falls the wintry rime.

THE TWIN SISTERS.

STAND both before me; for, when one is gone,
I scarce can tell which is the absent one;
To stray asunder you should aye be loth,
So much alike ye are—so lovely both.

Together ye are peerless, but apart
Each may be match'd by each; to rule the heart
Keep, gentle cherubs! a conjoin'd sway;
Our love's divided when there's one away.

Oh wherefore both so lovely? wherefore came
Such beauty separate, and yet the same?
Was it too great for one alone to bear,
That each comes laden with an equal share?

It may be, Nature, anxious to excel,
Moulded one lovely face, and loved it well;
Then, hopeless to achieve a higher aim,
One other form'd in every line the same.

Or haply 'twas in kindness to the one,
That Nature would not trust her forth alone;
Lest she should mar her looks with vanity,
To think none other was so fair as she.

If you but hold a mirror up to each,
'Twill name its sister in its lisping speech;
And still, while equal loveliness is theirs,
May one see only what the other shares!

Beauty that only looks upon itself,
Becomes unlovely; yet, thou little elf!
Not e'en thy sister should be praised by thee,
Lest the harsh world pronounce it vanity.

Talk not to others of her silken hair,
Lest they should say, 'Thou know'st thine own as fair.'
Nor praise the lustre of her light blue eye,
Lest thy own glance win back the flattery.

Ah me! I wonder if alike ye'll prove
When maiden blushes paint the dawn of love:
Then will sad lovers, puzzled which to choose,
Find solace in the thought, 'Can both refuse?'

Then will the promise which the one has named,
Be haply often from the other claim'd;
And the fond wish of secret whisperer
Be met with—'Oh, it was my sister, sir!'

Go, go your ways, and in your little breasts
Still bear the innocence your joy attests!
Go, wander forth 'neath childhood's sunny sky,
And gather flowers whose fragrance will not die!

GLOAMING.

By the brassy clang of the village bell,
And the closing leaves of the pimpernel,
And the shadows deepening as they fell,
I knew it was the gloaming.

So I stole away by the drowsy corn,
In the gleam of a silver star new-born,
With a footstep slow and a heart forlorn,
All lonely in the gloaming.

The rook slid into the distant wood,
And left the sky without speck or cloud,
And the skulking corn-craik scream'd aloud,—
Then silent was the gloaming.

In the upland grange was a homely light,
It glimmer'd and then it darken'd quite,
And over my soul came a thought of night,
While wandering in the gloaming.

No soft warm hand to my side was press'd,
I felt but the beat of my own sad breast,—
The golden lines grew dim in the west,—
And dreary was the gloaming.

I had lost my May and was all alone,
The brook she loved had an alter'd tone,
And I join'd its wail for my poor May gone—
None heard me in the gloaming.

Oh! dark fell the night on her grave's green sod;
But I raised my eyes to her soul's abode:
And the light of the stars was a smile from God,
To cheer me in the gloaming.

WAITING FOR THE SHIP.

Now he stroll'd along the pebbles, now he saunter'd on
the pier,

Now the summit of the nearest hill he clomb;

His looks were full of straining, through all weathers
foul and clear,

For the ship that he was weary wishing home.

On the white wings of the dawn, far as human eye could
reach,

Went his vision like a sea-gull's o'er the deep;

While the fishers' boats lay silent in the bay and on the
beach,

And the houses and the mountains were asleep.

'Mid the chat of boys and men, and the laugh from
women's lips,
When the labours of the morning were begun,
On the far horizon's dreary edge his soul was with the
ships,
As they caught a gleam of welcome from the sun.

Through the gray of eve he peer'd when the stars were in
the sky—
They were watchers which the angels seem'd to send;
And he bless'd the faithful lighthouse, with its large and
ruddy eye,
For it cheer'd him like the bright eye of a friend.

The gentle waves came lisping things of promise at his feet,
Then they ebb'd as if to vex him with delay;
The soothing winds against his face came blowing strong
and sweet,
Then they blew as blowing all his hope away.

One day a wiseling argued how the ship might be delay'd—
'Twas odd,' quoth he, 'I thought so from the first;'
But a man of many voyages was standing by and said—
'It is best to be prepared against the worst.'

A keen-eyed old coast-guardsmen, with his telescope in hand
And his cheeks in countless puckers 'gainst the rain,
Here shook his large and grizzled head, that all might
understand
How he knew that hoping longer was in vain.

Then silent thought the stranger of his wife and children
five,
As he slowly turn'd with trembling lip aside;
Yet with his heart to feed upon his hopes were kept alive,
So for months he watch'd and wander'd by the tide.

'Lo, what wretched man is that,' asked an idler at the coast,
'Who looks as if he something seem'd to lack?'

Then answer made a villager—‘ His wife and babes are lost,
Yet he thinks that ere to-morrow they’ll be back.’

Oh, a fresh hale man he flourish’d in the springtime of
the year,

But before the wintry rains began to drip—

No more he climb’d the headland, but sat sickly on the
pier,

Saying sadly—‘ I am waiting for the ship.’

On a morn, of all the blackest, only whiten’d by the spray

Of the billows wild for shelter of the shore,

He came not in the dawning forth, he came not all the
day;

And the morrow came—but never came he more.

THE LINNET.

Tuck, tuck, fear—from the green and growing leaves;

 Ic, ic, ic—from the little song-bird's throat;

How the silver chorus weaves in the sun and 'neath the
 eaves,

While from dewy clover fields comes the lowing of the
 beeves,

And the Summer in the heavens is afloat!

Wye, wye, chir—'tis the little linnnet sings;

 Weet, weet, weet—how his pipy treble trills!

In his bill and on his wings what a joy the linnnet brings,

As over all the sunny earth his merry lay he flings,

 Giving gladness to the music of the rills!

Ic, ic, ir—from a happy heart unbound;

Lug, lug, jee—from the dawn till close of day!

There is rapture in the sound, as it fills the sunshine round,

Till the ploughman's careless whistle and the shepherd's

pipe are drown'd,

And the mower sings unheeded 'mong the hay.

Jug, jug, joey—oh, how sweet the linnet's theme!

Peu, peu, poy—is he wooing all the while?

Does he dream he is in heaven, and is telling now his dream,

To soothe the heart of simple maiden sighing by the stream,

Or waiting for her lover at the stile?

Pipe, pipe, chow—will the linnet never weary?

Bel, bel, tyr—is he pouring forth his vows?

The maiden lone and eerie may feel her heart less dreary,

Yet none may know the linnet's bliss except his love

so cheery,

With her little household nestled 'mong the boughs.

NEW VERSES ON AN OLD THEME.

OLD bards have sung of love, yet is the theme

Fresh as the song

Of a continually bursting stream,

Or as the long

Long-aged moon, whose beauteous crescent-beam

Proclaims her young.

The theme is old, even as the flowers are old

That sweetly show'd

Their silver bosses and bright budding gold

Where ADAM trod,

And still peep forth, through grass and garden-mould

Fresh sent of God.

Then may I all anew of love—old love,—

Essay to sing:—

Meek is its flight, though oft it soars above

Hope's fancying:

'Tis now the eagle, and anon the dove

Of lowly wing.

Sometimes 'twill gaze, aspiring to a throne,

As it might vow

To reach some star that on its path had shone;

Sometimes 'twill bow,

And place a radiant diadem upon

A rustic brow.

Sometimes 'twill choose for its bless'd altar-place

One changeless spot;

Anon a pilgrim pathway will it trace—

A weary lot—

Following through waning years, o'er widening space,

The early sought.

The sweet desires of love are pour'd aloft

In prayerful looks;

The voice of love is musical and soft

As Summer brooks—

In twilight paths 'tis heard, or faltering oft

In window-nooks.

Sometimes it blooms in its own calm retreats

Like the queen-rose,

That, when the sun the welcome Summer greets,

Her beauty shows—

Sometimes it dies in bud, ere its pure sweets

It can uncloze.

Love, artist-like, will trace upon the heart

Its bright romance,

By slow degrees, with anxious, labour'd art;

Or at a glance,

As if sun-blazon'd, will the image start

To life at once.

Its home is ever 'mong the beautiful;
The loveliest dyes
That Summer painteth it delights to cull,
And in its eyes
The whole wide heaven, as in a magic pool,
Reflected lies.

Its language is as garlands of fresh flowers
From FLORA's lap,
Its breath their fragrance, and its sorrow-showers
The dews that drop
From heaven to cool them, when the balmy hours
Are flush'd with hope.

Love from the very clouds that gird it round
A palace rears;
The rudest soil it makes enchanted ground;
O'er future years
Throws sun-bright glances, or to one green mound
Gives heart-wrung tears.



THE EMIGRANTS.

THE daylight was dying, the twilight was dreary,
And eerie the face of the fast-falling night;
But, closing the shutters, we made ourselves cheery
With gas-light and fire-light and eyes glancing bright.

When, hark! came a chorus of wailing and anguish!
We ran to the door and look'd out through the dark;
Till, gazing, at length we began to distinguish
The slow-moving masts of an ocean-bound bark.

Alas! 'twas the emigrants leaving the river,
Their homes in the city, their haunts in the dell;
From kindred and friends they had parted for ever,
But their voices still blended in cries of farewell.

We saw not the eyes that their last looks were
We heard but the shouts that were meant to
But which told of the aching of hearts that were
A past of delight and a future of tears.

And long as we listen'd, in lulls of the night
On our ears the sad shouting in faint music
Till methought it seem'd lost in the roll of the
And the rocks and the winds only echoed far

More bright was our home-hearth, more bright an
As we shut out the night and its darkness or
But pale were the cheeks that, so radiant and r
Were flush'd with delight a few moments be

So I told how the morning, all lovely and tend
Sweet dew on the hills, and soft light on the
Would follow the exiles, and float with its sple
To gild the far land where their homes were

In the eyes of my children were gladness and gleaming:

 Their little prayer utter'd, how calm was their sleep!

But I in my dreaming could hear the wind screaming,

 And fancy I heard hoarse replies from the deep.

And often, when slumber had cool'd my brow's fever,

 A dream-utter'd shriek of despair broke the spell;

'Twas the voice of the emigrants leaving the river,

 And startling the night with their cries of farewell.

TO A COQUETTE.

LADY! would'st thou learn of me
Love's designing witchery?
Listen, I have learn'd of thee:—

Choose the youth whom thou would'st win,
Woo him with thine eyes' sweet sin,—
Wherefore wait till he begin?

If he ask thy hand to dance,
Yield thou with a dazzled glance,—
Talk to him of old romance.

Let thy voice be low and meek,
That he scarce may hear thee speak,—
Listening, he may touch thy cheek.

Feign a sad unhappiness,
Something thou may'st not confess,—
Sympathy may soothe distress.

Tell of walks by soft moonlight,—
Should he say 'Wilt walk to-night?'
Start half wishful, half in fright.

Wile him into window-nooks,
Flatter him with fervid looks,
Lean with him o'er pictured books.

Languish if he stay away,
'Aye be with me,' seem to say—
Man will never say thee nay.

Dear, deceitful strategy!
Cupid's slyest archery!
Thus may hearts ensnar'd be.

SONNET.

LET not our lips pronounce the word Farewell
To those we cherish;—if we needs must part,
On hope's illusions let the fancy dwell,
Nor deem that distance can make cold the heart!
Though I should look through sorrow's dim eclipse,
And print warm partings on the loved one's lips—
To speak the last sad word my tongue were dumb:
Or, if it syllabled my soul's emotion,
'Twould be to tell how pilgrim steps have come
To worship at the shrine of love's devotion!—
So be the language of despair unspoken
By those whose hearts nor time nor space can sever—
A fountain seal'd till hope be lost for ever,
And only gushing when the heart is broken.

THE SPARROW AND THE CAGED BIRD.

I note on every little bird
That twitters in the sun—
I love them all, from having heard
The simple tale of one.

In cage that 'neath the eaves was hung
When morn put forth her smiles,
A little yellow warbler sung
A song of distant isles.

One morn, when loud its melody,
There came on idle wing
A sparrow, and from sympathy
Thus seem'd to say or sing:—

‘ Fair captive! why this joyous lay,
 When sad should be thy heart?
Art thinking of a happier day,
 Forgetful what thou art?

‘ Perchance, while high thy music floats,
 Where ne’er thy wings may flee,
Thy spirit rises with thy notes—
 For they at least are free.

‘ Thy song goes forth among the trees,
 And up to heaven’s high dome,
And haply bears thee o’er the seas
 To thy own island home.

‘ Poor bird! could’st thou come forth with me,
 I’d lead thee to the grove,
Where ‘all that’s known of slavery
 Is servitude to love.

‘How sweet to join our airy chase,
Or cower within thy nest,
Yet only bound to that one place
Because thou lov’st it best!

‘Alas, alas! the wish is vain,
Thy prison-bars are strong;
But I will come to thee again—
Adieu, sweet bird of song!’

Away it flew, but day by day
Return’d with gather’d food;
And through long months, the watchers say,
They mark’d this work of good.

They mark’d the faithful sparrow come,
The songster’s lot to cheer—
To make it feel its cage a home,
With something kindred near.

I felt my thoughts to heaven ascend,
Such heaven-taught love to trace,
And deem'd, perchance, this captive's friend
The HOWARD of its race.

ON A BUTTERFLY IN A CHURCH.

THIS rural Sabbath, ere the psalms begin,
Let it come freely in!
A little living miracle it seems,
Come down on the sun's beams,
To preach of nature's gladness all day long.
Chief of the insect throng!
Tiny patrician! on whose bannery wings
Are bright emblazonings,
Wherefore beneath this roof disport thyself,
Mysterious, wayward elf?
Proclaim thy mission! Dost thou come to tell
Of spangled mead and dell—
Of the rich clover-beds, of humming bees,
And high o'erarching trees?

Thou seem'st the very colours to have sipp'd
From wild-flowers rosy-lipp'd;—
Hast thou, then, left them pale? and com'st thou here,
In penitence and fear?
Or art thou—sacred thought!—a spirit come
To worship 'neath this dome—
A soul still laden with a worldly love,
Finding no rest above?

Ah, garish creature! thou art now astray,
And fain would'st be away!
Had'st thou a tongue, I know thou'dst ask where dwell
The flowers thou lov'st so well,
Whose little fragrant chalices are fill'd
With dew-drops fresh distill'd?
I know thou'dst ask where shines the blessed sun,
And where the small brooks run?
This is no place, no temple meet for thee—
Away, thou should'st be free!

Go, like a child's thought, to the sunny air!

Be thou a preacher there!

Preach 'mid the congregation of the flowers,

Through Summer's fleeting hours—

Thyself a living witness of His might

Who gave thee to the light!

THE CACTUS.

In a corner spot
Of our glass-house hot,
A cactus grows in an earthen pot:
'Tis prickly and queer,
With a blade like a spear,
And ugly and old,
And cover'd with mould;—
Still JOHN the gardener shows its blade,
With a wink and a nod
At its shape so odd,
As if 'twere a joke in the way of his trade,
By himself and old dame Nature made.

'Neath the slanting roof
Are a warp and a woof
Of the leaves of the vine, 'gainst the sunbeams proof;
And spread on the wall
Is a myrtle tall;
But the stranger knows
Where the cactus grows;—
For JOHN the gardener shows its blade,
With a wink and a nod
At its shape so odd,
As if 'twere a joke in the way of his trade,
By himself and old dame Nature made.

Of many a hue,
Pink, purple, and blue,
Are the flowers on benches above the flue,
Range above range
All bright and strange;
But the strangest I ween
Is the cactus green;—

Compared with these all written words seem weak—

They make old conquering Time his spoils restore,

Give back the look imperial CÆSAR wore,

Recall the bloom on CLEOPATRA'S cheek.

The thrills of genius—the conceptions vast

Of ANGELO and RAPHAEL—all are ours;

With CLAUDE we range amid Arcadian bowers,

And own a mighty empire in the past.

Such are the trophies won by art sublime,

That make the embalm'd forms of Egypt's race

Poor mockeries, where we may only trace

The warning triumphs of decay and time.

So may we still enjoy the living presence

Of all round which the heart hath wound its strings;

So may we treasure up life's transient things,

And fix a deathless seal on evanescence.

THE VOICE OF SLEEP.

LIGHTLY tread and softly speak,
Quench the light—my eyes are weak;
Though I love the moonlight wan,
Draw the curtain 'gainst the dawn.

Timid, shy, and sensitive,
In the day I fear to live,
Save in breast of infancy—
Home of sweet tranquillity.

Then the cradle soft prepare—
Lay the weary infant there;
With a veil subdue the light—
Woo me with a mimic night.

Sweet by night the voice of rills,
Sweet the murmur on the hills,
Sweet the whisper 'mong the trees,—
Nature's minor minstrelsies.

Empty all the house of care—
Soothing lullabies be there:
Empty it of noisy glee—
Float me in on melody.

Now I fly from palace door,
Startled by the revel's roar;
Now from downy couch I flee,
Awed by wealthy misery.

Where proud Folly holds her court,
Few my visits, restless, short;
But on pallet poor and hard,
Take, O Toil! thy best reward.

Oft in flickering parlour I
Sudden come and sudden fly,
Won by silence—hurried off
By an idle word or cough.

Sometimes I in chimney-nook
Pop from aged hand the book—
Seal young eyes whose bashful love
Might the stolen kiss reprove.

From the parson's oily tongue,
Glide I oft the flock among,
Till, o'ercome with dullest load,
Sagest heads begin to nod.

Hark! of conscious guilt the groans!
Ever do I fly its tones:
Not for me thy couch of pain—
Guilty man! thou plead'st in vain.

But, sweet maiden, who art thou,
Pale of cheek and sad of brow?
Guilt thy brain has never cross'd,
Why to peace and me art lost?

Answer'd by thy bosom's sob,
Startled by thy pulse's throb,
Vainly I attempt to lull
Sorrow in a heart so full.

One is false who ne'er was true—
Hard if I forsake thee too!
Yet thou seem'st to court distress,
Fearing most forgetfulness.

Might I loose thy fancy's chain,
Thou might'st see thy love again;—
All that's past or distant seems
Liveth in the land of dreams.

There ambitious youth may roam;

There the exile find his home—

Youth its visions realise—

Age get back its memories.

Children of a wondrous race!

Mine your first, your last embrace;—

I have woo'd you through life's gloom—

I will wed you in the tomb.

BLANCHE

WERE I a breath of summer air,
I'd wander over bank and lea,
And bring, from every wild-flower there,
Sweet messages of love to thee.

WERE I a stream, with low soft song
I'd woo thee to some green retreat,
And linger as I pass'd along,
In bliss to murmur at thy feet.

WERE I a bird with mellow throat,
I would forsake the pleasant grove,
And tune for thee the softest note
That music dedicates to love.

For thee my daily wishes burn;
 In dreams thy angel face I see;
I bid my thoughts to others turn,
 My thoughts unbidden turn to thee.

Such love thyself may'st live to prove;
 Yet thine will be unmix'd with pain,
For never, surely, can'st thou love,
 But thou wilt be beloved again.

SONNET.

WHEREFORE the wassail-bowl and wine-cup reeking?
Wherefore the drunken shout and festal glee,
Filling night's ear with wasteful revelry?
Is this an hour for mirth's delirious seeking,
When Time, man's gravest monitor, is speaking,
With iron tongue, in deep funereal tone;
And the old year, on its closed hinge is creaking,
Shutting out friends, and joys, and hopes bygone—
Life's cherish'd dreams, fast fading one by one?
Ah, reason's cheat! our spirits are low sunk,
And all this joyous livery is put on—
Like spring leaves sprouting from the wither'd trunk
Of some old tree—joys nourish'd by our tears,
Put forth to hide the grief that mourns the lapse of years.

FLORA.

WINTER around me lies;
But if I wander'd, in bright summer hours,
To pay a poet's homage to the flowers,
A fairer flower would rise:

For, where the wild-bee sips
The rose's moisture in a lingering kiss,
I could not choose but fancy all the bliss
Of tasting FLORA's lips.

O maiden ever dear!
Such words I would not to another tell,—
Love, like the music of the ocean shell,
Should breathe but to one ear.

Forgive me if the strings
Of a true heart their tenderest strains rehearse,—
It is the privilege of gentle verse
To speak forbidden things.

If thou dost deem me wrong,
And thy loved lips give out cold words of blame—
'Twill be a bitter thought they were the same
Ask'd and inspired the song.

Woman they say is weak—
Yet hath she weapons to subdue the strong—
The eye's quick glance, the music of the tongue,
The bloom upon the cheek.

Thus arm'd for love's gay list,
To her the proudest conqueror must yield—
The bright cuirass, strong helm, and brazen shield,
Are powerless to resist.

Retreat alike is vain:

As well the wounded bird might seek to soar—

The stricken deer to bound the mountains o'er—

The slave to burst his chain.

How oft hath lover found,

Seeking through absence to escape her wile,

That she had bribed his fancy with a smile,

To keep alive the wound!

Sweet FLORA, sweet and young!

Rich in the Summer brightness of thy teens,

The gather'd gladness of thy gladdest scenes

Is bursting from thy tongue.

Long bask in joy's bright beam;

And should'st thou ever dream the dream of love,

Oh never, maiden! may'st thou wake to prove

'Twas nothing but a dream!

NEMESIS.

I HAVE plighted my troth to thee,
I have plighted my troth to thee,
But if now thou should'st prove untrue,
There's a wooer will marry me;
Oh, if now thou should'st prove untrue,
I e'en shall be false like thee,
For, if e'er thou should'st prove untrue,
There is one will be true to me.

I have vow'd to be only thine,
I have sworn to be wholly thine,
But if absence should change thy love,
There's a wooer will soon have mine;

Oh, if distance should cool thy love,
My heart will be false like thine,
For, if falsehood should kill thy love,
I know who will then have mine.

And I'll lay me down in his bed,
In the bed of the bridegroom true,
And I'll rest in his grass-green bed,
With its curtains of gold and blue;
And I'll sleep in his silent bed,
In the clasp of my bridegroom true,
And forget, in his dreamless bed,
The wrong thou shalt live to rue.

BRITAIN TO THE WORLD.

PRINCES! men of every station!
Men of every hue and clime!
Hearken to the British nation—
Hear a people's voice sublime!

Truth by persecution nourish'd,
Still to cherish be our pride;
Else in vain has MILTON flourish'd,
Else in vain has SYDNEY died.

Commerce to behold deliver'd
We have thrown our portals wide,
Boldly as the chains we sever'd
From the negro's bleeding side.

Come then with your fruits and spices;
Come then with your loaded grain;
Bring your sugars, teas, and rices—
Take our barter for your gain.

Fair exchange is mutual payment;
Trade to each yields ample share;
Come and buy our surplus raiment
With the food you have to spare.

Then shall fade the victor's laurels,
And war's blood-red star go down,
And the healer of our quarrels
Be the hero whom we crown.

Then shall they be branded cowards
Who are recreants to truth;
Then shall SHAKSPERES, NEWTONS, HOWARDS,
Be the names to fire our youth:

Names that shine in Britain's story;
Names that to the world belong;
Heralds of the higher glory
Of a world redeem'd from wrong.

By our patriots and martyrs,
By despotic power withstood,
By our rights and by our charters,
By our common brotherhood:

Let us be to each a brother—
Living for each other's weal;
Let us learn to love each other,
For each other's woes to feel:

For each other's wants to labour
By the light of deathless books,
While the rusted spear and sabre
Brighten into pruning-hooks:

While the rapid shuttle rattles
Through the loom with grateful sound,
Lulling all the din of battles,
Weaving peace the world around:

All the world together binding,
Binding all the world in one—
Wide as are its waters winding,
All-embracing as its sun.

TO THE MOON.

To thee an orison of love

In silence let my spirit breathe;

I see ten thousand worlds above,

I tread one little world beneath—

One little world upholding me

Within the blue immensity!

Fair moon! I wonder what thou art!

Yet haply 'twere a grief to know;

For wert thou different to my heart

Thou might'st not half so saint-like show;—

Far purer joys than knowledge brings

Are mine in my imaginings.

For myriad ages thou hast been

A wanderer through the fields of space;
And yet on every varied scene

Thou look'st with still a youthful face.
All beauteous scenes thou mov'st among,
With smiles that keep thee always young.

How oft upon the plains afar—

Where the Chaldean shepherd stood,
In worship of each little star
That lit the azure solitude,
Hast thou, sweet moon! the livelong night,
Diffused thy calm religious light!

And o'er the Alpine mountain tops

Have thy pale beams like spirits walk'd;
Yet pausing on the gentler slopes,
As in a trance of wonder lock'd
At the huge pinnacles on high,
Upraised in silent majesty.

Thence 'mid the ruins of old Rome,
Once honour'd by a mighty race;
But now the parent and the home
Of men degenerate and base—
Thou wand'rest with an earnest gaze,
As in a dream of other days.

And oh! how many mourners' sighs,
How many pensive poets' dreams,
How many lovers' rhapsodies,
Have been indulged beneath thy beams!
Thy light, it is religion all,
And earth one wide confessional.

Night's soft enchantress! not a sound
Within thy calm dominion breaks;
And yet, though all is hush'd around,
Methinks the very silence speaks,
And breathes to thee through all the air
The homage of a voiceless prayer.

I gaze—and from these mortal eyes,
 My soul, the while in holy trance,
Upsoars like incense to the skies,
 Pervading all the blue expanse;
As if it melted in thy light,
And blended with the Infinite.

But fare thee well! and while again
 I shape my thoughts to daily themes,
And join the rivalry of men
 For phantoms idle as their dreams;
Still let remembrance turn to thee,
Subduing all to poesy!

HOME TRIAL.

I NEVER thought of him and death, so far apart they
seem'd—

The love that would have died to save of danger scarcely
dream'd;

Too late the fear that prompted help—too late the yearn-
ing care;

Yet who that saw his lustrous face could doubt that death
would spare?

Oh, could my pangs have lighten'd his, or eased his fail-
ing breath,

I would have drain'd the bitter cup had every drop been
death;

But though I drank his agony until my heart o'erflow'd,—
From off the little sufferer's breast I could not lift the load.

It weigh'd him down; I saw him sink away from life
and me:

Grief waded in the gentlest eyes; my own could scarcely
see:

He look'd so calm, he felt so cold—all hope, all life had
fled—

A cry of pain would have been sweet, but pain itself was
dead.

They took his form of innocence, and stretch'd it out
alone;

Tears fell upon the pulseless clay, like rain-drops upon
stone;

They closed his eyes of beauty, for their glory was o'ercast,
And sorrow drew its deepest shade from gladness that
was past.

The sun was lazy in the heavens that day our darling died,
And longer wore away the night we miss'd him from our
side;

All sleep was scared by weary sobs from one wild heart
and mine—

The only sleep in all the house, my innocent! was
thine.

I made mad inquest of the skies; I breathed an inward
psalm:

The stars burn'd incense at God's feet—I grew more strong
and calm:

I utter'd brave and soothing words as was my manhood's
part,

Then hurried speechlessly away to hide the father's heart.

His coffin-crib a soft hand deck'd with flowers of sweetest
scent;

To beauty and decay akin, their living breath they lent;
But never could they breath impart whence other breath
had flown;—

Ah me! affection's helplessness, when death has claim'd
his own!

|| Our child was now God's holy child, yet still he linger'd
here;—

† Oh, could we but have kept him thus, the pictured dust
how dear!

But soon the grave its summons writ upon the black'ning
■ lips,

And wheresoe'er I look'd for light, I only saw eclipse.

■ There was no loveliness in flowers, in human eyes, or
■ books;

Dear household faces flitted round with pain'd and ghastly
■ looks;

A shadow muffled like a mist the splendours of the day,
■ And sorrow speaking to the night took all its stars
away.

■ No more might fair hands fondly smooth the pillow for his
■ head;

■ The joyless task was now all mine to lay him in his

I laid him in his earth-cold bed, and buried with him
there,
The hope that trembling on its knees expired 'mid broken
prayer.

As in the round and beauteous bud the promise we may
trace
Of the unfolded perfect flower, I used to read his face,
Till love grown rash in prophecy foretold him brave and
strong—

A battler for the true and right, a trampler on the wrong

Had I my life to live again I know how I would live,
And all the wisdom I have learn'd, to him I meant to
give—

To bless his glowing boyhood with the ripeness of my age
And train him up a better man, to tread a nobler stage:

To train him up a perfect man the crown of life to win,
With kingly chastity of thought to awe rebellious sin,—

With all the lights thrown forward of a bright unwasted
youth—

soul as pure as cloister'd love, and strong as castled
truth.

is lot, how happy had it been, with age to guard and
guide!

and yet he might have proved a sire—his darling might
have died:

so, I need not canvass more the heavens why this should
be—

h! better to be early dead, than live to weep like me!

ears! tears! ye never can be his! The thought my own
should dry;

et other thoughts and sadder thoughts still brood the
fountains by:

Why was a treasure to me given, for death so soon to
take?

h, may the answer be a heart grown purer for his sake!

Striving one day to be myself, of living things I thought,
And musing on my blessings left, a calm was in me wrought,
Till gliding to my infant's room, all noiselessly I stept,
And shudder'd as remembrance woke that there no more
 he slept.

The world is emptied of my child, yet crowded with his
 loss;

The silence and the vacancy my steps for ever cross;
With every sound of merriment my sorrow is at strife,
And happy infants stare at me like pictures wanting life.

My eye grows greedy of distress;—what healthless looks
 I meet!

What tear-writ tales of anguish in the coarse unheeding
 street!

Yet while the wasting griefs I trace in other hearts that
 dwell,

The sympathy I fain would give my own heart sootheth
 well.

gain, to dwarf my woe, I dream of war and shipwreck
dire—

f choking pit—of crashing train—of fierce o'ermastering
fire;—

las! the thousand frantic ills, which some are doom'd
to prove;—

God! how sweetly died my child 'midst ministries of
love!

, gently wail, ye pleasant winds! and weep, ye silver
showers!

rou shadow of the cypress tree lie lightly on the flowers!
re Summer has its mildews, and the daylight has its
clouds,

nd some put on their marriage robes, while some are
clad in shrouds.

rus o'er the gleaming track of life the generations
run—

o they to clodded darkness pass, or to a brighter sun?

Does nothing spiritual live? can soul become a sod?
Is man on earth an orphan? is creation void of God?

Is the resplendent cope of night deserted, drear, and dead!
Does no great ear lean down to catch the prayers by good
men said?

Is groan of murder'd patriot, or shout of martyr'd saint,
As idle as on savage shores the homeless ocean's plaint?

Above the lands that front the sky in the illumined east,
The stars hang low and large like lamps at some immortal
feast,

And from those lands so near to heaven have wondrous
voices come

Of God's eternal fatherhood, and man's celestial home.

I marvel, then, dear child of mine! whom 'neath the
grass I laid,

If wing'd and bright, a spirit now, though scarcely purer
made,

Thou liv'st in His almighty care in mansions of the skies!
Oh say, wilt thou come down to me, or I to thee arise?

Great mysteries are round thee, child! unknown or dim
to me,

But yet I cannot dread the death made beautiful by thee;
The path thy little feet have trod I may not fear to tread,
And so I follow in the dark, as by an angel led.

SONNET.

WHEN man, alone or leagued in governments,
The works of Christian duty would fulfil,
His faltering steps defeat his anxious will,
As heights attain'd reveal but fresh ascents:
How poor his efforts to his high intents!
Fain would he uproot every human ill;
But fields neglected open to him still,
And woe on woe its piteous tale presents.
Nature alone succeeds in all she tries:
She drops her dews, and not a flower is miss'd;
She bids the universal grass arise,
Till stony ways and wilds antagonist
Are into emerald beauty softly kiss'd,
To show the power in gentleness that lies.

THE END.

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